



Flexible, agile and secure: Customer experience in the era of social distancing

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
The new "normal" in contact centers: Challenges and Opportunities	4
Konecta's strategy: Responding, Restarting and Growing	7
A final word.....	9
About Konecta.....	9

INTRODUCTION

This is an unprecedented crisis, both in terms of its size, and of its scope and response. The COVID-19 pandemic has been disruptive to the world economy and to most industries, with interruptions of the supply chain, strict quarantines in most of the countries, and organizations exploring the possibility of remote work with a view to a long-term, or even permanent implementation.

However, what makes this crisis different from previous ones is the technology at our disposal to respond. Let's take videoconferencing as an example. Previous videoconferencing technologies were complex, incompetent, and expensive to operate. Modern videoconferencing technologies are easy to implement and use, and are accessible for all companies, regardless of their size. Nevertheless, this time, inflexibility goes beyond technological considerations and affects human nature: our habits today are the constant that impacts the adoption of technology more than any other factor. Undoubtedly, the current world health crisis will accelerate the need for flexible and agile work styles and further boost the adoption of technologies that enhance the balance between work and personal life.

This situation takes place at a time when the competitive dynamic of a large number of industries increasingly revolves around customer experience (CX). Everywhere in the world, CX is becoming the major factor impacting customer loyalty and the key differentiator that determines the success of the business. Companies can no longer ignore this phenomenon, and must direct their attention to service providers that can offer them a superior CX, i.e., a competitive edge.

For their part, CX service providers faced an unprecedented situation resulting from the lockdown and social distancing measures, which made it impossible for them to continue to operate normally. Hence, they had to take swift measures to ensure the continuity of operations. Remote work or the "work from home" modality consolidated as the main element for ensuring high service levels. Also, given the difficulty of efficiently responding to the growing volume of telephone interactions, many suppliers opted strongly for digital channels, such as chats, web collaboration, e-mail, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and other social networks.

Certainly, for most companies in Latin America, adapting to this new reality will require a great deal of work and effort. But what is also certain is that they will come out of this crisis very differently from the way they entered.



THE NEW "NORMAL" IN CONTACT CENTERS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Based on the social distancing measured enforced in all of Latin America to a greater or lesser extent, the first reaction of contact centers in the region was to send agents home, as quickly as possible, and work from there. While the depth and breadth of these initiatives were conditioned by the governmental rules and regulations enforced in each country, remote work allowed providers to continue to provide services rather efficiently.

It is true that, for many companies, remote work programs pose certain risks. Nonetheless, companies were faced with the choice of accepting the risk and working to minimize it, or allowing customer interactions to remain unanswered for some time. In this regard, the main concerns were related to data security and the potential impact on productivity for employees, either due to the quality of the infrastructure or the lack of supervision, especially in the case of new hires. Surprisingly, we have witnessed the implementation of different solutions to solve these issues almost immediately. Among them is sending wireless portable routers to improve Internet connection at employees' households, or the use of workforce optimization tools (WFO) for agents to access their performance metrics, as well as real-time coaching and support activities.



Now, important questions remain on the horizon of the companies that do not offer remote work as an option. For example, what happens to those agents who are forced to enter into a working environment in which they feel insecure? Will agents trust those employer brands when this crisis decreases and their job prospects improve? The companies that decide not to adopt the work from home model, at least partially, could see their agents suffering from burnout more frequently as the pandemic comes to an end, a very negative prospect given the high turnover rates traditionally present in contact centers.

What is clear is that, in this crisis, the long-term success of a contact center depends on agents providing positive and satisfactory experiences to the customer. The CX world revolves around people. In addition to the best technology, optimized processes and product innovation, the way in which agents behave is ultimately what gives a company a quality leap in the relationship with its customers. This is the reason why Employee Experience (EX) is as important as CX: without satisfied employees, satisfactory results will be virtually impossible to achieve for customers. During this pandemic, EX seems intrinsically linked to the possibility of remote work, given that more than 70% of agents have indicated their preference for this work modality, according to research by Frost & Sullivan. In this sense, it is important to note that recruitment is changing by leaps and bounds. Nowadays, the process is not only virtual, but the profile of the agent who works remotely is also different. But that's not all, training has also experienced a significant transformation, with new tools, such as gamification and e-learning, which allow reducing preparation times and notably improving results.



Adopting a remote work program is only the first of many steps that companies have taken since the beginning of this pandemic. Service providers have faced various challenges such as drastic fluctuations in demand, and the need to relocate a large number of agents in other activities, which has demanded a significant share of agility and flexibility to be successful. At the same time, data security concerns have been emphasized with the massive implementation of teleworking. However, while these concerns were the main reason why some companies were reluctant to adopt a teleworking model prior to pandemic, the security solutions available in the market have substantially progressed to rule them out and this is something we have recently verified. The progress made in virtual environments, multi-factor authentication (MFA) and encryption have established the necessary conditions to secure remote spaces, which has forced leading companies to adopt technological tools that allow ensuring the security of data pertaining to customers, employees, and organizations. The risk of not doing so is high: More than 50% of consumers will have a negative view of a brand for over a year, after a leak of sensitive data¹.

1. Neustar.



It is clear that this crisis is leading numerous companies to reevaluate their technology acquisition strategies and choice of suppliers and partners. At the same time, today's decision makers are faced with a landscape of uncertainty in the upcoming months. Not only does economic recession seem inevitable -and with it the possible decrease in business activity demand-, but the evolution of the COVID-19 is also unclear, and it is not possible to rule the emergence of a new outbreak that plunges the world into a new quarantine out. In this context, companies must establish robust business continuity plans to allow them to prepare for a more agile and frictionless transition, in the event of not being able to use their facilities.

With that in mind, values such as flexibility, agility, scalability and time-to-market become fundamental parts for any modern companies seeking to be ready in the face of a contingency. For these reasons, the cloud (cloud computing) is becoming the preferred technological modality for contact centers. According to research conducted by Frost & Sullivan, 82% of companies in Latin America points out that the cloud allows leveraging new technologies, 77% expresses that it allows offering new services and applications more quickly, while 58% states that the cloud is key to corporate agility. Also, the cloud allows companies to access to the latest technology quickly and safely, without major investments.

Likewise, the use of AI-based tools is allowing companies to respond to the growing demands of clients, while reducing costs significantly. These solutions provide several advantages, like automating repetitive and transactional queries; enhanced efficiency in the workflow of agents; facilitating the resolution of customer queries and tasks; and, consequently, contributing to brand differentiation. Frost & Sullivan notes that solutions with enhanced AI are quickly becoming the new paradigm in the field of corporate technologies worldwide, and our region is no exception. Indeed, we expect that their prospective and prescriptive capabilities will impact user experience as no other technology has done so far.

KONECTA'S STRATEGY: RESPONDING, RESTARTING AND GROWING

This pandemic has had disruptive effects on the CX service industry. All suppliers were unable to continue operating as usual, and had to react swiftly to transform their operational model and continue to support their customers. Nonetheless, not all companies rose to the occasion, nor managed to efficiently respond to the challenges posed by the crisis. The companies that did, successfully combined agility, resilience, manageability and financial muscle.

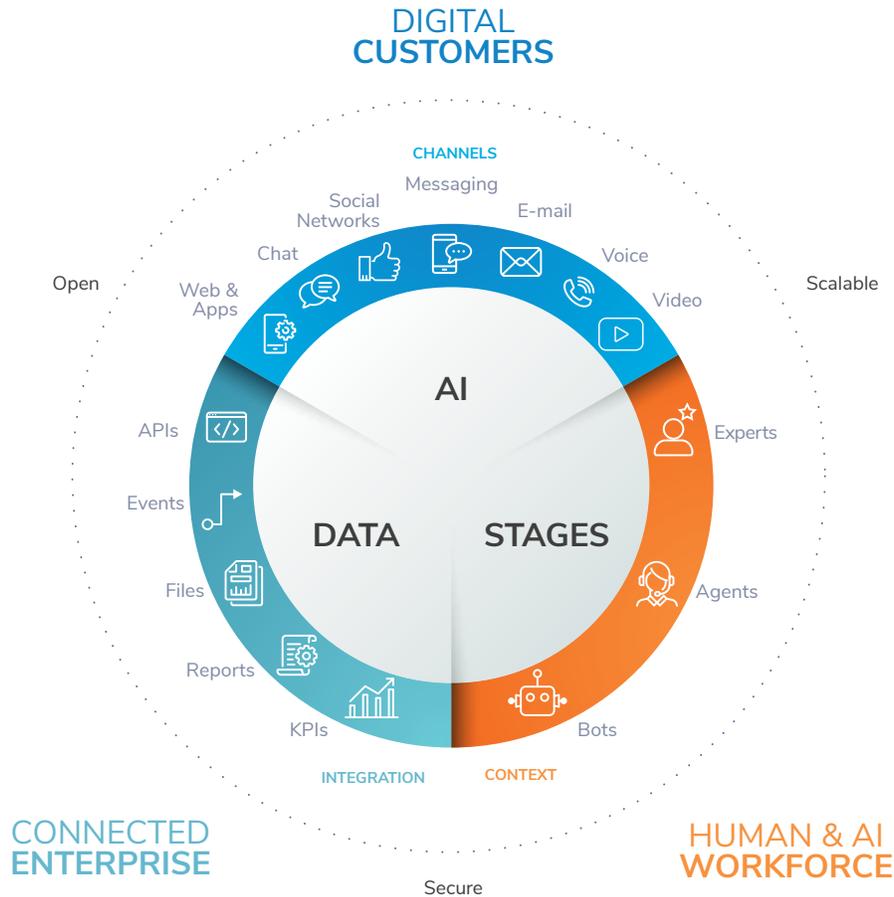
Konecta positioned itself as one of the leading providers that managed to successfully deal with the crisis and transform its management model, without major impacts. The company managed to migrate 45,000 employees to the remote work modality in only two months, while maintaining high quality service levels, and prioritizing the health of employees along the way. “We had to reach a very ambitious goal in a short period of time, showing an unprecedented management, reaction, flexibility, operational and technical muscle”, says Mr. Enrique Garcia Guillon, General Business Director, Konecta Corporate in Spain. The high complexity of the challenge so requested. In fact, according to Mr. Ivan Morero, CEO, Konecta Argentina, “we managed to quickly evolve in the most challenging context that we have had to deal with so far.” Finally, Mr. Jose Roberto Sierra, President, Konecta Colombia, notes that “the fundamental axis was protecting the Employee Experience of the employee to ensure providing superior customer experience. If we failed to guarantee EX, namely, the life and health of people, we would not have been able to offer a CX in the way our customers are used to”.

Nevertheless, the immediate response to the crisis is only the first step for companies that aim at remaining relevant to their customers and markets. As we head towards the “new normal”, it is clear that the practices of the past no longer suffice, and that organizations must adapt to a new environment to survive. Thus, while working in responding to the current situation, it is important to focus on the recalibration of expectations, forecasts and strategies ahead of what is ahead. “Responding, restarting and growing” is Frost & Sullivan's solution against the crisis. This conceptual framework captures the main issues now faced by those who are in charge of digital transformation in their companies. In the words of Mr. Mariano Castaños Zemborain, Business Development and Expansion Director for US and LATAM: “At Konecta, we were able to structure a team fully focused on understanding the new reality and building a value proposition, combining the best technologies and operational capabilities to support our customers achieve their business goals in this new context, while most of the team was given the task of responding to this complex and challenging situation. This is how Konecta Cloud came into being, (All the power of Konecta, now from home).”

Konecta also restarted its expectations through the reconfiguration and renewal of its value proposition to the market, with the launch of its “Konecta Cloud” platform. In order to enhance its digital transformation digital and that of its customers, Konecta leverages the agility of the cloud to create a technological ecosystem that groups all the tools required to shape a fully digital contact center. Konecta Cloud is based on three fundamental principles:

- **Open:** It has the ability to integrate with the companies' current systems, both in terms of Contact Center technology and of internal corporate applications.
- **Scalable:** Based on a technological ecosystem that incorporates experts in different disciplines, such as Amazon Web Services or Genesys, and adapts to the needs of each operational model.
- **Secure:** Konecta prioritizes the enhancement of job securization with the incorporation of advanced technologies that protect access, communications and data.

KONECTA CLOUD - VALUE PROPOSITION AND COMPONENTS



Source: Konecta

The launch of Konecta Cloud positions the company in a favorable position to bounce back and generate growth in the “new normal”. A clear example of this is the “virtual workplace”, a fully managed service to enable teleworking in a quick and secure manner, that is also compatible with current technologies. Undoubtedly, in this new context, customers will require agile suppliers that adapt to sudden changes in demand and the mode of work and that, in turn, provide a secure, digital, close, effortless, proactive, reliable and decisive experience. While the pandemic continues and evolves, the companies that have shown flexibility, efficiency and results, are a step ahead of their competitors.

“The paradigm shift is now consolidated. Society has changed, the way in which we communicate has changed, as have the tools to do so. However, our digital strategy is based on what will remain, what brought, brings and will continue to bring us together, and on the ability that people have to connect. Our goal is clear, we move along this path with determination and confidence, making sure that every step we make is a solid one.”

- Jesus Barrio Vidal, CEO, Konecta Group

A FINAL WORD

There are many questions that will define the future and to which companies and customers will have to accommodate: Will COVID-19 dissipate or become stronger? When will a vaccine become available? How long will the lockdown last and how great will the impact be on the economy of our countries? Fortunately, some truths have already been clearly identified. Firstly, there will be winners and losers in this crisis. Providers who have been up to the challenges of these months will reap the fruits of their performance, inasmuch as more and more customers see the convenience of partnering with them. Consequently, the first effect that we will see in the near future will be a market concentration where the most competent will prevail.

CX service providers will also see an escalation in the number of new business opportunities, as more and more companies will appreciate the benefits of process outsourcing outside the core of their business. But the field where the competitive battle of the future will be waged is different. We will not return to the CX world that existed prior to this pandemic. Frost & Sullivan expects the future to be hybrid and to incorporate elements from several environments, with a combination between Work From Home and Brick and Mortar, and a greater adoption of asynchronous communications, self-service and digital channels. 75% of Fortune 500 CEOs expect this pandemic to accelerate the advancement of digital transformation in their organizations². The key to this process is that technology has become the key to providing relevant services for customers and, hence, a fundamental competitive differentiator. In this context, having the right strategic partner that drives us in the path towards transformation can be the difference between a thriving business and one in decline.

Rethinking the business and redesigning processes that deliver value to customers is an ongoing process, one day at a time. Not starting to move towards this process or approaching this transformation too late it may mean an immediate loss of competitiveness. The path to your success starts now, what are you waiting for?

ABOUT KONECTA

Konecta is an international organization focused on excellence in CX management and innovation that provides comprehensive outsourcing services to clients worldwide, through a sustainable model that helps create value to shareholders, customers and employees, while remaining fully committed to the environment and society. Its great expertise, of over 20 years, with major corporations in key sectors, has allowed streamlining the interaction processes with end users in a unique experience, in a multi-channel environment that encompasses the entire life cycle of the relationship of brands with their customers. With Konecta Cloud, the company gives a step forward, with an initiative that combines operations, technology and security to provide an innovative solution with its Work Anywhere Agents model, featuring a management of talent and optimization of processes that has allowed for having more than 45,000 teleworkers worldwide.

2. Fortune 500, 2020.

NEXT STEPS

- ① **Schedule a meeting with our global team** to discuss your ideas, challenges and opportunities for growth.
- ② Would you like to learn more about the issues covered in this White Paper? Call 977.GoFrost, and an analyst will contact you.
- ③ Visit our **Digital transformation** website.
- ④ Come to our events on **Growth, Innovation and Leadership (GIL)** to discover new opportunities for growth.

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